

Women's HEALTH

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- Urinary Tract Infections
- Vaginal Infections
- STDs

The American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation has favorably reviewed this material through 2007. Favorable review means that medical information is accurate, but does not imply endorsement of any conclusions presented.



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Menstrual Cycles

Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)

Symptoms

The most common include:

- Worry, bad moods, mood swings, tension
- Sadness, sleeplessness, fatigue, forgetfulness
- Bloating, weight gain, headaches, breast tenderness
- Increased hunger, sugar and/or salt cravings

Prevention/HomeCare

- Get at least eight hours of sleep every night.
- Exercise often.
- Eat small, frequent meals.
- Eat complex carbohydrates (such as bread, pasta, and potatoes).
- Eat high-fiber foods (like almonds, apricots, bran, and prunes).
- Eat foods high in vitamin B6 (like bananas, dried beans, fish, liver, pork, potatoes, and poultry).
- Eat foods high in calcium (like beans, dairy products, dried peas, and leafy green vegetables) and magnesium (like fish, leafy green vegetables, milk, nuts, soy beans, and whole-grain cereals).
- Stay away from sugar, white flour, and sodium (especially right before your period).
- Stay away from caffeine, alcohol, and cigarettes.
- Consider taking food supplements.



WARNING

Consult your doctor before taking supplements.

Cramps

Symptoms

- Mild to severe pain in the lower stomach and back
- Upset stomach, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Fainting


Prevention/HomeCare

- Exercise often.
- Eat foods rich in calcium and/or consider taking food supplements.
- Take pain relief medication as directed.
- Ask your doctor about birth control pills.
- Take a hot bath or put a hot water bottle on your lower stomach or back.
- Get a massage or try acupressure.

Absent or Irregular Periods

Symptoms

- No periods
- Unusually short or long menstrual cycles

 Call your doctor during office hours, if you have irregular periods or miss a period.

Prevention/HomeCare

- Cut back on intense exercise.
- Get plenty of vitamin B6 and/or consider taking food supplements.
- Eat foods rich in calcium and/or consider taking food supplements.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Reduce stress.

Anemia

Loss of blood through menstruation may lead to anemia. People with anemia feel tired, appear pale, develop palpitations, or become short of breath. Talk to your doctor if you have any of these symptoms.

SAFE TAMPON USE

- Wash your hands before putting in a tampon.
- Change tampons every three to six hours.
- Avoid super-absorbency tampons.
- Use sanitary napkins at night.

Breast Exams

Breast exams help find changes in the breasts that are sometimes breast cancer warning signs. Keep in mind, however, that most breast changes turn out to be benign (harmless).

Exam Schedule

The schedule below is recommended by the **American Cancer Society**. Be sure you talk to your doctor about whether this is the right exam schedule for you.

Breast Self-Exams

Age	How Often
20+ yrs.	Your doctor can give you guidance on how often to do breast self-exams.

Clinical Breast Exams

Age	How Often
20-39 yrs.	Every three years
40+ yrs.	Every year

Mammograms

Age	How Often
40+ yrs.	Every year

Clinical Breast Exams

Most women get a clinical breast exam as part of a regular checkup. During this exam, a health professional feels and looks for changes in your breasts.

Mammograms

A mammogram is a safe, low-dose x-ray of the inside of your breast. It can pick up changes in the breast that are too small to feel. During a mammogram, your breast is gently squeezed between two plates to get a good picture. This takes only a few seconds, and, for most women, causes only mild discomfort.

Breast Self-Exams (BSEs)

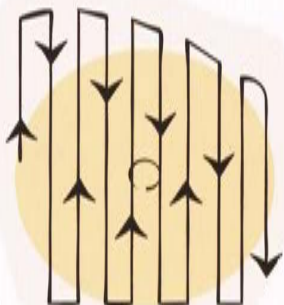
Step 1: Look at Your Breasts

Stand in front of a mirror. Look at your breasts:

(1) with your arms raised overhead, (2) with your hands on your hips pressing down, (3) with your arms at your sides and (4) while bending forward.

Step 2: Feel Your Breasts

- Lie down. Place a pillow or folded towel under your right shoulder and your right hand under your head.
- Start on the edge of your breast near the collarbone (the bone that runs across the top of your chest). Using the finger pads of the three middle fingers on your left hand, move down your breast to the bottom of your bra line.
- Move in about one-half inch and work your way back up.
- Continue this down-and-up pattern until you reach your breastbone (the bone that runs down the middle of your chest).
- Move the pillow or towel under your left shoulder and repeat on your left breast.



Breast Changes to Watch For

- A firm lump that feels different from the rest of the breast
- A change in skin texture (how it feels) or skin color
- A new dimple on the breast
- A newly retracted (pulled in) nipple
- Nipple discharge without squeezing the nipple
- Bloody nipple discharge



Call your doctor during office hours, if you notice any of the signs or symptoms listed above.

Exam/Shot Schedule

Exam/Shot	How Often
Blood Pressure	Every 1-2 years
Cholesterol	Every 5 years
Blood Sugar Level	See below*
Breast Self-Exam	Check with your doctor
Clinical Breast Exam	Every 3 years (Age 20-39) Every year (Age 40+)
Mammogram	Every year starting at 40*
Pelvic Exam/ Pap smear	Every 1-3 years
Sexually Transmitted Diseases	See below*
Sigmoidoscopy	Every 5 years starting at 50*
Fecal Occult Blood Test	Every year starting at 50*
Skin Exam	Every year
Dental Exam	Twice a year for checkup and cleaning
Influenza (flu)	Every year starting at 50
Pneumococcal	Once at age 65 Booster*
Tetanus-diphtheria	Every 10 years
Tuberculosis (TB) Exam	See below*

* Talk to your provider about your personal risk factors and testing/shot needs.


Sources: The National Women's Health Information Center; The Office on Women's Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2004). The American Cancer Society (2004).

Menopause

Menopause refers to the time when women stop getting their periods. It often occurs between the ages of 45 and 60.

Symptoms

- Frequent, heavy, or missed periods
- Hot flashes, night sweats, fast heartbeat
- Vaginal dryness
- Urinary incontinence, urinary tract infections
- Moodiness, forgetfulness

 Call your doctor during office hours, if you have heavy or irregular bleeding.

HomeCare

Frequent, Heavy, or Missed Periods

- Exercise often and avoid alcohol.
- Don't take aspirin.

Hot Flashes and Night Sweats

- Exercise often and avoid alcohol.
- Avoid spicy food, hot drinks, and caffeine.
- Eat foods rich in vitamin E (such as almonds, brown rice, corn, legumes, and vegetable oil).
- Drink cool water or juice.

Vaginal Dryness

- Drink a lot of water.
- Use a water-based lubricant gel.
- Have sex often and engage in more foreplay.

Urinary Incontinence

- Avoid caffeine and drink a lot of fluids.
- Urinate on a regular schedule.
- Do Kegel exercises.

Kegel Exercises

- Stop in mid-stream while urinating, then start again. The muscles you used are your pelvic muscles.
- While not urinating, squeeze your pelvic muscles.
- Hold for three seconds, relax for three seconds.
- Repeat 10-15 times, three times each day.



Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is the loss of bone tissue resulting in brittle and easily broken bones.

Symptoms

- Lower back pain when standing, bending, or lifting
- Gradual loss of height
- Rounded shoulders, stooped posture
- Bone fractures

Prevention/HomeCare

- Exercise often.
- Get plenty of calcium and/or consider supplements.
- Don't smoke.
- Avoid alcohol, soft drinks, and caffeine.

Recommended Calcium Intake

<u>Age</u>	<u>Daily intake</u>
25 to 50	1,000 mg
Over 50	1,500 mg (1,000 if taking estrogen)
Pregnant or nursing	Additional 400 mg

Food Sources of Calcium

<u>Food</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Calcium</u>
Nonfat milk	1 cup	300 mg
1% milk	1 cup	300 mg
2% milk	1 cup	295 mg
Broccoli (boiled)	1 cup	180 mg
Navy beans (boiled)	1 cup	130 mg
Tofu	1/2 cup	130 mg
Almonds	1 oz	75 mg

UTIs (Urinary Tract Infections)

A UTI is a bacterial infection in the urinary tract and bladder.

Symptoms

- Burning or itching when going to the bathroom
- Cloudy urine
- Feeling an urgent need to go to the bathroom, but only urinating a small amount
- Going to the bathroom more often than usual
- Pain in the lower stomach or back
- Fever

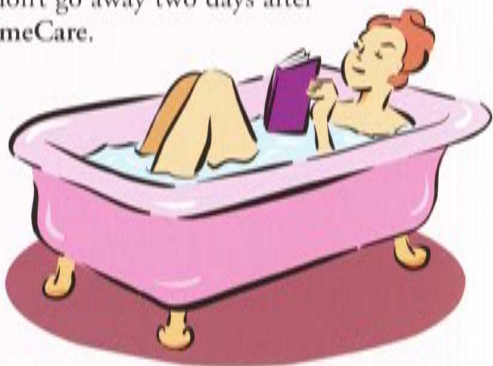
! Call your doctor right away, if you have:

- A fever of more than 100°F.
- Blood or pus (a thick white substance) in the urine.

★ Call your doctor during office hours, if your symptoms don't go away two days after starting **HomeCare**.

Prevention

- Drink eight or more glasses of fluid each day.
- Soak in a tub of plain hot water each day.
- Go to the bathroom often (especially right before and after sex).
- Keep yourself clean (wipe from front to back).
- Don't use douches, bubble bath, or perfumed toilet paper or soap.
- Don't leave a sponge, diaphragm, or tampon in for more than eight hours.
- If you use a diaphragm, make sure it's the right size.
- Wear cotton underwear and loose-fitting pants.



HomeCare

- Drink cranberry juice and herbal tea.
- If you are post-menopause, ask your doctor about estrogen cream.

Vaginal Infections

Vaginal infections refer to infections, inflammations, or irritations in the vagina. Some vaginal infections are spread through sexual contact.

Yeast Infection

Symptoms

- Itching (often severe)
- Thick, white, curdy discharge with a “yeasty” smell
- Burning and swelling of the vulva (outer lips)

Vaginosis

Symptoms

- White or gray discharge with a “fishy” smell
- Pain when going to bathroom or having sex
- Cramping in the lower stomach

Trichomoniasis (trich)

Symptoms

- Itching or pain when going to the bathroom
- Watery, foamy, green or yellow discharge



Call your doctor during office hours, if you have:

- A yeast infection for more than five days after starting over-the-counter medication.
- More than two yeast infections in a year.
- Any vaginosis or trich symptoms.

Vaginal Infection Prevention/HomeCare

- Keep yourself clean (wipe from front to back).
- Don't use douches or perfumed tampons.
- Don't leave a sponge, diaphragm or tampon in for more than eight hours.
- Wear cotton underwear and loose-fitting pants.
- Get pap and pelvic exams every year.
- For yeast infections, take over-the-counter medication as directed.
- To prevent vaginosis and trich, use latex condoms.


STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases)

STDs are contagious illnesses and infections that enter the body through close personal contact.

HIV and AIDS

Symptoms


- Night sweats, fever
- Fatigue
- Upset stomach, weight loss
- Swollen lymph nodes, pneumonia, infections

 Call your doctor during office hours, if you have symptoms or think you have been exposed.

Chlamydia

Symptoms


- Yellow discharge, spotting
- Lower stomach pain

 Call your doctor during office hours, if you have symptoms or think you have been exposed.

Herpes

Symptoms


- Blisters on the vaginal area, mouth, gums, or throat
- Vaginal discharge
- Slight fever
- Headaches

 Call your doctor during office hours, if you have symptoms or think you have been exposed.

Genital warts

Symptoms


- Small fleshy bumps or white patches on lips around vagina or on anus
- Bumps and patches may be itchy

 Call your doctor during office hours, if you have symptoms or think you have been exposed.

Gonorrhea

Symptoms


- Burning pain when urinating
- Fever
- Stomach pain
- Thick, yellow or greenish-yellow discharge

 Call your doctor during office hours, if you have symptoms or think you have been exposed.

Syphilis

Symptoms

- Hard, painless sores in vagina or anus (stage one)
- Skin rash, patchy hair loss, fever, swollen lymph glands, and flu-like symptoms (stage two)
- Serious health problems and death (stage three)

 Call your doctor during office hours, if you have symptoms or think you have been exposed.

STD Prevention

- Have sex with only one partner (and make sure your partner is only having sex with you).
- Use latex condoms. For the best protection, use latex condoms with nonoxynol-9. Don't rely on "natural" or lambskin condoms.
- Don't rely on spermicides, the sponge, or diaphragms for protection. Always use a condom.
- Use condoms with all new partners until you are sure your partner is not infected. People infected with an STD sometimes have no symptoms. It can take up to six months before HIV can be detected.
- Don't have sex with anyone who has symptoms or who has been exposed to an STD.
- Don't have sex if you or your partner is being treated for an STD.
- If you or your partner has herpes, don't have sex when a blister is present. Use condoms at all other times.

The information in this guide has been accumulated from current medical literature and is generally accepted by the medical community at this time. However, this information is not meant as a substitute for personal medical advice. If you have worrisome symptoms or conditions, contact a physician immediately.



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